

Education in Action: Reflective Practice

Muhammad A Siddiqui

School of Health Sciences, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, UK

Abstract

Action research and learning is a process to improve the practice of teaching and training by critical analysis and engage our self in designing and evaluating training programmes and continuing professional development. Personal narrative writing on our experiences and practice plays a vital role in learning and teaching. Self evaluation is useful to assess our performance using videotapes recording during teaching, logbooks, and personal portfolios. There is a strong relationship between research and teaching. Collaborative nature of learning and understanding of process of research is crucial for broad approach to educational enquiry, research and evaluation.

Introduction

I am a physician and currently a PhD research student. I involve in postgraduate teaching and workshops at QMU. An article improving learning and teaching through action learning and action research persuades me to think and point out theoretical framework for action learning and action research and learning experiences. "Action research is conceived as a philosophy, a theory of learning, a methodology and a technique.... Action research not only advances knowledge, but also improves practice in higher education by developing people as professionals and personal scientists and organisations as learning organisations"(Zuber-Skettitt 1993 p 43). Action learning is a critical reflection on our experiences and practice through personal and group discussion within academics, teachers and managers. Reflection on our practice helps us to prevent repetition of mistakes. At the same time, think reflectively enhance our capability to examine critically and improve our own understanding. The process of assessment and reasoning helps us to set solid foundations for our teaching career.

After reading an article Teacher writing for professional learning: Narrative (Aharonian 2008), I found that note taking process itself helpful and considerable literatures are dealing with the role of writing in the personal and professional lives of educators. “I began asking myself why those texts never came to my attention previously. In addition, I began exploring why, despite my active involvement in many educational projects, I felt no drive to write professionally neither private, reflective texts nor public pieces for publication” (Aharonian 2008, p 116). Various studies have been conducted on professional learning and writing pedagogy for educationalist, not many studies have investigated teachers writing and the role of writing in their professional development. Several educators have reveals their valuable experience while writing in private: “I write because I need to understand myself and others...” (Monroe 1992, p. 69). We can conserve our professional identity by engaging ourselves in reflective writing and practice.

Evaluation of practice and continuing professional development

Evaluation is an essential part of the educational process and play important role in as part of their quality assurance procedures. I was reading about the evaluation to improve practice in learning and teaching and the article has given me the opportunity to evaluate my personal teaching practice. Macdonald (2006) has given me approach to examine the main aspects of evaluation in a set of questions: such as *Why* evaluate? *What* to evaluate? *How* to evaluate? *When* to evaluate? and *With whom* is the evaluation undertaken?.

Self evaluation and direct observation of teachers by peers can provide an informed, valuable and diagnostic evaluation. Evaluation provides evidence of how well students' learning objectives are being achieved and whether teaching can be improved (Morrison 2003). Importantly self and peer evaluation using video tapes (Micro-teaching (teaching simulation) during short course in facilitating learning and teaching) and feedback form during short course in facilitating learning and teaching at the university was really a good learning

experience. During the course Micro teaching peer and self evaluation helped me to reflect on my current practice and develop the idea to involve students in lectures or class using recap, mind map or tag in technique. I changed my teaching practice and applied several new approaches towards teaching style, delivery, contents and organising lecture, results from feedback and video tapes.

An article Factors affecting the impact of professional development programs on teachers' knowledge practice, student outcomes & efficacy encouraged me to get insight about the professional development programs that utilised a range of delivery style, including workplace learning through action research, coaching and mentoring, institutional learning to facilitate understanding of research findings and best practice, online learning, participation in formal award programs and conferences and seminars (Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis 2005).

To achieve greater understanding of what involved in learning and teaching for postgraduate students I attended one day workshop postgraduate who teach: developing the next generation. The most palpable point that uncovered for me was the advantage of working as part of a group. As every participant possess their own point of view, many different ideas produced and group participation made me feel more energetic about contributing in teaching and learning and my professional development. The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) created by Vitae explained me the knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities need in the academic research and professional development. Framework helped me to understand and articulate my own experiences and future practice in learning and teaching. RDF encouraged me to consider my personal and professional development and gave me opportunity for self-assessment and review of my current practice and future application. At the end of the day I realised that student centred learning approach to teaching is valuable and there is a need to provide more time and support to the International student. One of the

major insights was to consider more options for activities in teaching and structured marking and feedback to students.

Integration of scholarship, research and professional activities with teaching and supporting learning

I believe that this course has played a major role in my development as a teacher and has given me courage to think how my teaching affects my students learning and to link teaching, learning and scholarship. I have been most influenced by what has written in an article titled as new lecturers' constructions of learning, teaching and research in higher education (Nicholls 2005). What I learned from the paper is to develop culture of sharing and working together as a team and willing to change or reform for the benefits to all. In order to make sure that the knowledge disseminate, there are few steps that are identification, collection, adaption, organization and finally dissemination of knowledge and research using synchronous technique such as meeting room, discussion and forum. Elton's (2001) argued that there is a strong symbiotic relationship between research and teaching. The sharing retrieves knowledge from the person memory and makes it accessible to the other individual, team and department by sharing ideas, opinions, knowledge and expertise in meetings, academic workshops and courses. Paper convinced me that collaboration is the key to success in designing activities when time and resources are limited. Moreover Rice (1992, p 73) suggested that the scholarship of teaching has a distinctive synoptic capacity. That is the ability to draw the strands of a field together in a way that provides both coherence and meaning, to place what is known in context and open the way for connections to be made between knower and the known.

I attended 2 days' workshop on Essential skills and Pedagogic Research that enables me to improve and broaden my knowledge and competencies and develop the skills I required in my teaching career and professional practice. Firstly, the most obvious thing that learned was

the advantage of working as part of a group and broad approach to educational enquiry, research and evaluation. I discovered formulation of focused research questioner hypothesis and establishing aims and objectives related to question/hypothesis. Secondly I learned selection of appropriate research methodologies and data collection methods in educational research. I realised that the academics used a typical form of evidence to influence the student thinking and approach. This difference forced me to think on realistic practices and evidence informed educational practice and policy. The discussion was quite instinctive, but also enlightening me the essential elements of ethics and governance in relation to educational research.

The workshop has enriched my knowledge in resourcing, training and competence in relation to educational research. During the course I convinced with the importance of the timely delivery of research studies. According to Kolb (1984), two dimensions are required for research and scholarship. The first described as a grasping or perceiving medium and the second one as a transformation or processing medium. Learning results from the way people perceive and then process that information, making it their knowledge. Finally attending this work shop I learned how to formulate research outcomes and products that formulate a contribution to evidence informed practice and policy in health care professional education.

Conclusion

After attending the course and narrative writing I realised that anything can be turned into something impressive and fertile if we put enough energy and effort. I learned that every activity and design has its strengths and weaknesses; important thing is how we fabricate the fruits out of them. I found that personal evaluation, peer review, evidence based educational practice and reflection and continuous professional development is the key elements to improve the quality of education.

References

- Aharonian, N. (2008). Teacher writing for professional learning: A narrative. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 7(3), 115-125
- Elton, L. (2001). Research and teaching: conditions for a positive link, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 6, 43–56.
- Ingvarson, L., Meiers, M., & Beavis, A. (2005). Factors affecting the impact of professional development programs on teachers' knowledge, practice, student outcomes & efficacy. *Professional Development for Teachers and School Leaders*. Retrieved April 29, 2011, from http://research.acer.edu.au/professional_dev/1
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Monroe, R. (1992). *Getting it down and sending it out*. In K. L. Dahl (Ed.), *Teacher as writer: Entering the professional conversation* (pp. 69-73). Urbana, ILL: NCTE
- Macdonald, R. (2006). The use of evaluation to improve practice in learning and teaching. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 43 (1), 03–13
- Morrison, J. (2003). ABC of learning and teaching in medicine: Evaluation. *BMJ*, 326, 385-387
- Nicholls, G. (2005). 'New lecturers' constructions of learning, teaching and research in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (5), 611-625
- Rice, R. E. (1992). *Towards a broader conception of scholarship: the American context*, in: T. Winston & R. Geiger (Eds) *Research and higher education* (Buckingham, UK, Open University Press).
- Zuber-Skettitt, O. (1993). Improving Learning and Teaching through Action Learning and Action Research. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 12 (1), 45-58